Impact of a guideline update on recommendations and didactic material: the example of AFAM (African First Aid Materials)

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Background
In 2011, Belgian Red Cross developed first aid and prevention guidelines adapted to the Sub-Saharan African context, according to the principles of Evidence-Based Practice. These guidelines were brought together into the African First Aid Materials (AFAM). In 2016, the AFAM guidelines were updated, taking into account the latest scientific evidence, expert opinions and target group preferences, and using a vastly improved methodology.

Objectives
To assess the impact of this update on the AFAM recommendations and didactic materials.

Methods
BEST AVAILABLE SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE
# included studies were compared between 2011 and 2016
Evidence-based by CEBaP

PREFERENCES AND AVAILABLE RESOURCES OF THE TARGET GROUP
Collected via African Red Cross societies

FROM GPP TO WEAK RECOMMENDATION
Fire safety education for prevention of burns
- 2011: “Teach children about household objects that can burn them and about the danger of fire.”
- 2016: Limited evidence of low quality in favour of safety education. Statistically significant increase in:
  - safe hot water temperature
  - installation of fire guards
  - having a fire escape plan compared to no safety education.

3. Expert opinion
Changes in ⁴ recommendations
e.g. Vaseline for treatment of burns
- 2011: “Do not use vaseline for burns. Vaseline is not sterile and can cause infection.”
- 2016:
  - Limited evidence of moderate quality in favour of vaseline
  - Expert panel:
    - Evidence compares vaseline with silver sulfadiazine
    - Vaseline and silver sulfadiazine mask the wound, making it difficult for a medical doctor to judge

Sentence about the use of vaseline is left out

4. Target group preferences
- Additional chapter on anatomy and physiology
- Additional background information on psychosocial first aid, malaria, cholera and measles

Conclusions
- Methodological improvements have led to more sensitive searches of evidence and identification of additional relevant evidence.
- Updating the AFAM guidelines has exposed new scientific evidence, fine-tuned expert opinions and revealed new target group preferences. A five-year update of evidence-based guidelines is therefore worthwhile and warranted.
- In run-up to the next update, the systematic collection of feedback from the target group should receive more attention.